

1 H.898

2 Introduced by Representatives Szott of Barnard, Coffey of Guilford, Austin of
3 Colchester, Burke of Brattleboro, Demrow of Corinth, Dolan of
4 Waitsfield, Gannon of Wilmington, Haas of Rochester, Hashim
5 of Dummerston, James of Manchester, Jerome of Brandon,
6 Killacky of South Burlington, Kornheiser of Brattleboro,
7 Mrowicki of Putney, O’Sullivan of Burlington, Pajala of
8 Londonderry, Potter of Clarendon, and Redmond of Essex

9 Referred to Committee on

10 Date:

11 Subject: Commerce and trade; economic development

12 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a
13 Working Hands Enterprise Program.

14 An act relating to creating the Working Hands Enterprise Program

15 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

16 Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. §§ 12–15 are added to read:

17 § 12. FINDINGS; PURPOSE; DEFINITIONS

18 (a) The General Assembly finds:

19 (1) Vermont’s creative economy is essential to social well-being, and a
20 thriving arts culture supports a thriving rural economy.

1 (2) Investing in Vermont’s creative sector is crucial to the State’s
2 communities, character, and culture.

3 (3) A growing body of national research tells us that the creative
4 sector—the people and businesses that make up a state’s cultural assets—
5 provides a powerful springboard for economic growth.

6 (4) Nationwide, the creative economy is particularly essential in rural
7 states.

8 (5) Arts and culture build the infrastructure for healthy, vibrant
9 communities where people want to live, work, and raise their families.

10 (6) Just as working lands are an essential part of the State’s identity, so
11 are “working hands.”

12 (7) Working lands and working hands are mutually supportive
13 components of Vermont’s place-based economy and provide many benefits
14 beyond the raw economic data. The data alone, however, is compelling.

15 (8) In Vermont, creative industries and jobs provide a substantial share
16 of all employment:

17 (A) In 2015, arts and culture contributed 3.2 percent of Vermont’s
18 GDP, or \$960 million.

19 (B) In 2018, creative industries provided 30,404 jobs across the State.

1 (C) At seven percent of all employment, Vermont has a higher share
2 of jobs in creative industries than the U.S. average. The majority of these jobs
3 are in design, specialty foods, and visual arts and crafts.

4 (9) Vermont’s creative sector is one of the strongest in New England.

5 (10) The State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
6 recognized in 2016 that “a vital arts community correlates strongly with the
7 overall strength of a region’s economic activity.”

8 (b) Definitions. As used in this section and sections 13–15 of this title:

9 (1)(A) “Creative economy” means the enterprises, organizations, and
10 individuals whose products and services are rooted in artistic and creative
11 content.

12 (B) The creative economy covers a broad range of industries, some of
13 which directly produce or perform art and others that use artistic creativity to
14 differentiate their products and create valued experiences.

15 (C) The creative economy includes seven segments:

16 (i) visual arts and crafts, which includes businesses that produce
17 and distribute artistic and cultural content;

18 (ii) film and media, which represents firms that produce,
19 distribute, and support film, radio, television, music, newspapers, and
20 computer and video gaming;

1 (iii) design, which encompasses architecture, landscape
2 architecture, interior design, and design-driven consumer and business
3 products and communications;

4 (iv) museums and cultural heritage, which consists of public and
5 private museums, historical sites, and cultural institutions;

6 (v) literary arts, which includes the art, reproduction, and
7 distribution of the written word, including writers, publishers, bookstores, and
8 libraries;

9 (vi) performing arts, which includes music, dance, and theatrical
10 performances and festivals, supports services to transport and stage
11 productions, and publicity and ticketing systems; and

12 (vii) artisanal foods and culinary arts, which comprises specialty
13 food producers and eating establishments that create unique culinary
14 experiences.

15 (2) “Creative hub” means a physical space that brings creative workers
16 together for networking, innovation, and synergistic support, and includes a co-
17 working space, a maker space, and other work sites devoted to creative
18 economy production.

19 (3) “Creative worker” means an artist, artisan, designer, writer,
20 performer, entrepreneur, and others employed in, or contributing to, the
21 creative economy.

1 § 13. VERMONT WORKING HANDS ENTERPRISE FUND

2 (a) The Vermont Working Hands Enterprise Fund is created within the
3 State Treasury.

4 (b) Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of 32 V.S.A. chapter 7,
5 subchapter 5:

6 (1) the Vermont Working Hands Enterprise Board created in section
7 14 of this title shall administer the Fund;

8 (2) the Fund is composed of amounts appropriated by the General
9 Assembly or received from any other source, private or public, approved by
10 the Board, and unexpended balances and any earnings shall remain in the
11 Fund; and

12 (3) the Board shall expend monies from the Fund consistent with the
13 duties and authority of the Board established in section 15 of this title.

14 § 14. VERMONT WORKING HANDS ENTERPRISE BOARD

15 (a) Creation. The Vermont Working Hands Enterprise Board is created and
16 for administrative purposes is attached to the Agency of Commerce and
17 Community Development.

18 (b) Organization of Board. The Board is composed of:

19 (1) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or
20 designee;

1 (2) three representatives from the Vermont Creative Network, appointed
2 by the Vermont Arts Council;

3 (3) a representative from the Vermont Council on Rural Development;

4 (4) a representative from the Vermont Arts Council;

5 (5) a representative from Vermont's Career and Technical Education
6 Centers;

7 (6) two representatives from regional economic development
8 organizations, appointed by the Secretary of Commerce and Community
9 Development;

10 (7) one member who represents visual arts and crafts, appointed by the
11 Vermont Craft Council;

12 (8) a representative of the U.S.D.A. Rural Business Development
13 Center; and

14 (9) a representative from the Vermont Specialty Food Association.

15 (c) Member terms.

16 (1) The members designated in subsection (b) of this section shall serve
17 initial terms of one year.

18 (2) After the expiration of the initial term, each appointed member shall
19 serve a term of three years or until his or her earlier resignation or removal.

20 (3) A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority for the
21 remainder of the unexpired term.

1 (4) An appointed member shall not serve more than three consecutive
2 three-year terms.

3 (d) Officers; committees. The Board may elect officers, establish one or
4 more committees or subcommittees, and adopt such procedural rules as it shall
5 determine necessary and appropriate to perform its work.

6 (e) Quorum; meetings; voting.

7 (1) A majority of the sitting members shall constitute a quorum, and
8 action taken by the Board may be authorized by a majority of the members
9 present and voting at any regular or special meeting at which a quorum is
10 present.

11 (2) The Board may permit any or all directors to participate in a regular
12 or special meeting by, or conduct the meeting through the use of, any means of
13 communication, including an electronic, telecommunications, and video- or
14 audio-conferencing call, by which all members participating may
15 simultaneously or sequentially communicate with each other during the
16 meeting. A member participating in a meeting by this means is deemed to be
17 present in person at the meeting.

18 (f) Compensation. Private sector members shall be entitled to per diem
19 compensation authorized under 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b) for each day spent in the
20 performance of their duties, and each member shall be reimbursed from the

1 fund for his or her actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out his
2 or her duties.

3 § 15. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE VERMONT WORKING HANDS

4 ENTERPRISE BOARD

5 (a) The Vermont Working Hands Enterprise Board shall have the authority:

6 (1) to establish an application process and eligibility criteria for
7 awarding grants, loans, incentives, and other investments in creative workers,
8 enterprises, and organizations engaged in Vermont's creative economy;

9 (2) to award grants and other investments, which may include loans
10 underwritten and administered through the Vermont Economic Development
11 Authority;

12 (3) to enter into performance contracts with one or more persons in
13 order to provide investment and services to eligible businesses, including:

14 (A) technical assistance and product research services;

15 (B) marketing assistance, market development, and business and
16 financial planning;

17 (C) organizational, regulatory, and development assistance; and

18 (D) feasibility studies of facilities or capital investments to optimize
19 construction and other cost efficiencies;

20 (4) to identify workforce needs and programs in order to develop
21 relevant training and incentive opportunities;

1 (5) to identify strategic statewide infrastructure and investment priorities

2 considering:

3 (A) leveraging opportunities;

4 (B) economic clusters;

5 (C) return-on-investment analysis; and

6 (D) other considerations the Board determines appropriate; and

7 (6) to pursue and accept grants or other funding from any public or
8 private source and to administer such grants or funding consistent with their
9 terms.

10 (b) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall provide
11 administrative support in order to support the Board in the performance of its
12 duties pursuant to this section.

13 (c) The amounts appropriated to the Vermont Working Hands Enterprise
14 Fund established in section 13 of this title shall be used by the Board:

15 (1) For enterprise grants to businesses and creative workers engaged in
16 Vermont's creative economy. These initial investments are intended to fund
17 an enterprise grant pilot program, and it is the intent of the General Assembly
18 to commit additional investment in subsequent years upon demonstration of
19 success of the program.

20 (2) For services to eligible businesses, including technical assistance,
21 business planning, financial packaging, and other services required by

1 companies ready to transition to the next stage of growth. These initial
2 investments are intended to fund a growth company services pilot program,
3 and it is the intent of the General Assembly to commit additional investment in
4 subsequent years upon demonstration of success of the program.

5 (3) For infrastructure investments, including investment in creative
6 hubs.

7 (d) In designing its application process and criteria and in awarding
8 funding, the Board shall consider the most effective means of encouraging
9 participation in the process by individuals and enterprises that have not availed
10 themselves of these opportunities in the past, and by individuals and
11 enterprises who have not recently received funding from the State or a
12 State-funded entity, as the Board deems appropriate.

13 (e) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall use
14 funds appropriated to it for the purposes of this act to perform its full duties to
15 the Board, to provide administrative support to the Board, and to provide
16 reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by Board members.

17 Sec. 2. IMPLEMENTATION; EFFECTIVE DATE

18 (a) This act shall take effect on passage.

19 (b) Board members appointed pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 14 shall be
20 appointed not later than June 30, 2020.